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ABSTRACT

This paper examines a Midwestern site of the National Writing Project for teachers, a professional development summer institute that fosters collaborative learning, increases teacher confidence and enthusiasm, and promotes reflection. The examination involves observations of and interviews with 19 Midwestern Writing Project (MWP) participants and field notes of daily activities. The paper analyzes how groups of people become learning communities, suggesting how educators might adapt such strategies to support professional development that empowers teachers to make and sustain change. The MWP fosters a learning community because it includes common themes and a sense of purpose, reduces isolation, increases faculty-student interaction, provides continuity and integration in the curriculum, and offers group identity and cohesion. MWP characteristics that promote community include small size, nurturing environment, rituals and norms, social construction of knowledge, and multiple perspectives. Relationships between members are typical of learning communities (e.g., interdependence, egalitarianism and collegiality, trust, caring, and respect). The MWP director acts as the standard bearer, catalyst in linking relationships, caretaker, and guide. The nature of learning in the MWP is like that of a learning community, with intellectual interaction, nontraditional interaction, collaboration, relevance, and a learner-centered focus. (Contains 92 references). (SM)

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ED 412 194

The Promise of Community in Professional Development

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Teacher inservice and professional development are receiving increased attention of late because of a growing belief that teachers are the key to school reform. As Linda Darling-Hammond has argued, in the effort to restructure schools, our time, money and attention are best directed to supporting teachers' professional development (1996). Equally clear is the need to abandon the dominant form of staff development, the one-shot workshop. Matthew B. Miles of the Center for Policy Research critiques the status quo in his foreword to Guskey and Huberman's (1995) *Professional Development in Education: New Paradigms and Practices*:

> Let's frame the issue in extreme terms. A good deal of what passes for "professional development' in schools is a joke--one that we'd laugh at if we weren't trying to keep from crying. It's everything that a learning environment shouldn't be: radically underresourced, brief, not sustained, designed for "one size fits all," imposed rather than owned, lacking any intellectual coherence, treated as a special add-on event rather than as part of a natural process, and trapped in the constraints of the bureaucratic system we have come to call "school."...[It] leaves its participants more cynical and no more knowledgeable, skilled, or committed than before" (vii).

Traditional professional development models, while well intentioned, often do not serve as catalysts for change, yet we continue to rely heavily on short-term in-service sessions and graduate-level university courses to help teachers advance their professional knowledge and theoretical backgrounds, and, thereby, improve their teaching. We continue to *train.*

The National Writing Project is a notable exception to this indictment. It began as a vision for "teachers teaching teachers" promoted by Jim Gray, who initiated the Bay Area Writing Project in 1973—the precursor to the National Writing Project—"to bring together gifted teachers of writing to reflect on what they were doing, read whatever was known about writing, do some writing of their own and share it with each other, and then after careful training and coaching become 'teachers of teachers'" (Goldberg, 1989, 65). Its founder describes these teachers as a "community of scholars" (Smith, 1996, 689) bridging the chasm between the university and the schools in a collaborative effort that focuses on the strengths of each. Today, the National Writing Project has touched the professional lives of more than a million teachers and has become an international network. It enjoys federal funding and a reputation for excellence and effectiveness that may be unparalleled in the educational community (Goldberg, 1989).

Studies of the National Writing Project over the past 23 years have shown that is indeed a powerful model for teachers' professional development. It answers many of the problems which led to Miles' critique: NWP is resourced through federal and other funds; a Writing Project is a sustained effort, initially spanning a full year; it espouses no one-size-fits-all approach for teachers

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or students; it is voluntary rather than imposed; it has coherent principles which guide and shape the work at individual sites; it is designed to enhance a teacher's natural inquiry process as he/she seeks to improve the teaching of writing; and although it supports the teaching of writing in the public schools, it operates independently outside of them. Studies have shown that a Writing Project fosters collaborative learning (Trent, 1995), supports the development of teacher-experts (Levan, 1992; Nilsson, 1981), leads to change in pedagogy/instructional methods (Carter, 1992; Hampton, 1990; Nilsson, 1981), energizes and enthuses participants (Zbikowski, 1992; Nilsson, 1981), increases teacher confidence (Nilsson, 1981), fosters reflection on teaching (Zbikowski, 1992), increases interest in conducting classroom research (Nilsson, 1981), and changes teacher attitudes about writing instruction (Detoye, 1989; Nilsson, 1981). The NWP has also served as a vehicle for developing a theory of teacher change (Thompson, 1979). Effects on the students of NWP teachers have also been studied, showing that teacher participation in the Invitational Summer Institute leads to improved student writing (Hampton, 1990; Shortt, 1986), increased academic engagement among students (Shortt, 1986) and increased writing by students (Nilsson, 1981). NWP proponents and participants attribute a number of other effects to the Project experience as well. Gallehr (1994) notes that Writing Projects hone skills and make sharp again those teachers who have been worn down by the daily grind of teaching. This notion of "revitalization" is a recurrent theme in literature about NWP (Mason, 1981).

Another recurrent theme in the literature is the sense of community which is fostered in the Writing Project's Summer Institute, the primary professional development initiative of any NWP site. In the past, such claims were largely anecdotal, although Watson's 1981 study showed that Project teachers describe a central factor in the Writing Projects' success as the mutual support fostered among teachers. Now, with the increasing acceptance of qualitative research methodology, the affective elements of the NWP experience being explored in a way that they could not be through quantitative studies and statistics. It is clear that some of these affective qualities of the Project experience are associated with its power to support change. Among these qualities is the aspect of community; once experienced in the Summer Institute, Project teachers need and want a professional community (Heller, 1993).

Miles (in Guskey and Huberman, 1995) has called for concrete images of how professional development which answers his critique would look like, and for descriptions of the kinds of support structures needed to create that kind of professional development. The study described in this paper was designed to answer that call, particularly to describe the support structures which may be responsible for the development of community. It comes at a time of *quiet revolution*, as Linda Darling-Hammond (1996) calls the current move to enhance the professional preparation and development of teachers. In part, this focus has evolved through a realization "that regulations cannot transform schools; only teachers, in collaboration with parents and administrators, can do that" (Darling-Hammond, 1996, 5). She further suggests that if teachers are the key to reform, then strategies to support teachers must include stronger preparation and professional development, coupled with greater autonomy:

It also means spending more on teacher development and less on bureaucracies

> and special programs created to address the problems created by poor teaching. Finally, we must put greater knowledge directly in the hands of teachers and seek accountability that will focus attention on "doing the right things" rather than on "doing things right." Such reforms demand changes in much existing educational policy, in current school regulations, and in management structures (Darling-Hammond, 1996, 5-6).

Part of this change must be in professional development. Experienced teachers must generate knowledge about teaching rather than being the recipients of such knowledge. This is a key tenet of the NWP model.

Sparks (1994) has found that shifting to a constructivist approach supports the development of a learning community. A learning community which is constructivist in nature—and therefore builds knowledge from the "bottom up"—may be a better model for professional development experiences for educators because they resist the notion that one "takes" a certain in-service, then "has" the knowledge and never needs to "have" it again (a kind of vaccination approach). A constructivist model also resists the top-down dissemination style of much in-service teacher education and holds promise for making more of an impact than typical in-service programs have been found to have. A professional community provides a context for problem-based approaches which are part of teachers' ongoing work with colleagues. This is in direct opposition, as was mentioned earlier, to the dominant model for staff development in the United States, the one-shot workshop. "Those who have access to teacher networks, enriched professional roles, and collegial work feel more efficacious in gaining the knowledge they need to meet the needs of their students and more positive about staying in the profession (Darling-Hammond, 1996, 9).

The National Writing Project is a professional development model which focuses on this kind of constructivist professional community—or learning community. Sheridan Blau, a California writing project director, notes that "[w]e have seen that teachers who become researchers, writers, authors—persons who are engaged in the construction of knowledge—will understand experientially what it means to construct knowledge in a community of learners and will devote themselves to figuring out how to turn their own classrooms into such communities for their students" (Blau, 1993, 17). Blau argues that experiencing learning as a construction of knowledge in the Writing Project Summer Institute is a key factor in bringing about classroom change because teachers become "converts" to this model of learning. As we rethink the needs of learners and the nature of learning, we recognize that opportunities for learning are socially constructed via learners' interactions with one another and with the artifacts in the classroom environment (Blau, Dixon and Jennings, 1995). At all levels of education for all learners, we realize that for knowledge to be socially constructed, there must be changes in norms regarding roles, the source of authority for knowledge, and the purposes and audiences for discourse (Peasley and others, 1992). Decisions such as these help move us from traditional classrooms to learning communities. The notion of community is central to the model, yet we have little concrete evidence as to what creates community in the Project experience. To illuminate this, we

must look to how other educators have described "community" and how they have defined "learning communities."

Shirley Brice Heath (1995) defines a community as a subgroup which provides emotional and common interest ties as well as a sense of subjective wholeness. This definition is one which informs our growing notion of what *learning communities* are or can be. Twenty-five years ago, learning communities were defined as "supportive environments" for learning (Graham, 1972). More recently learning communities have been defined as groups of people who share common goals and traditions, who realize their interdependence, and who strive to care for one another (Toomey, 1993). From that point, educators diverge to some degree in fleshing out this notion of community. Some focus on the aspect of caring as the key component, such as Wilcox & Ebbs (1992), who assert that learning communities foster an awareness of the importance of human dignity, nourish growth and achievement, and nurture respect of others. Others focus more on the cognitive, such as Whitmore and Crowell (1994), who portray learning communities as exemplifying a high level of intellectual expectation, authentic activities, and symmetric power and trust relationships. In the midst of such specialized uses, "learning community"[1] also has been used interchangeably with "classroom" or to describe any group engaged in a similar task or tied to a specific site. I will use the term to refer to learning communities which meet the general criteria proposed in 1984 by the National Institute of Education's Study Group of the Conditions of Excellence in American Higher Education (in White, 1989): common themes, a sense of purpose, reduced isolation of teachers from one another and from students, relating of faculty members to one another as specialists and educators, continuity and integration in the curriculum, and group identity and cohesion. These criteria seem especially appropriate because they reflect special concerns of the university and the adult learner.

In this paper I will focus specifically on one constructivist learning community which supports teachers' professional growth, a midwestern site of the National Writing Project (referred to hereafter as MWP or "Midwestern Writing Project"), in order to analyze how groups of people become communities of learners and to suggest how educators might adapt these strategies to initiate or support professional development that empowers teachers to make and sustain changes in their teaching. I had been aware of this particular teacher network for a number of years and seen its members take leadership roles in their schools, in the district, and in the state long before I was accepted as a Fellow in 1994. In 1996 I was invited to observe and to record the processes of the Summer Institute as a new cohort became MWP Fellows. Based on my experiences and my informal interactions with Fellows from earlier cohorts, I knew that I wanted to focus particularly on the aspect of community in order to understand how it develops and what role it plays in teachers' professional development. Recently, Bonnie Sunstein (1995) studied a similar kind of summer writing experience. Her book, *Composing a Culture: Inside a Summer Writing Program with High School Teachers*, describes this study. She finds that the

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[1]There are also learning community curricular models which links course work to promote coherence and intellectual interaction for a group of students. The four basic models are linked courses; course clusters; freshman interest groups; and coordinated studies (Smith, 1991).

aspects of choosing what to write about, writing, and getting response from the others is at the core of the transformations which teachers experience. It is the active support of a learning community that helps teachers become "more deeply and reflectively [them]selves" (Sunstein, 1995, 233). Descriptions of the National Writing Project focus on the atmosphere which develops when teachers teach one another and reflect on their practice over an extended period of time: "The stage is set for creating a unique learning community" (Smith, 1996, 689). Understanding how this community "happens" is the question I am pursuing.

This paper describes the preliminary findings of a qualitative participant-observer study of a 19-member cohort of MWP. Field notes of the daily activities of an MWP Summer Institute and follow-up meetings, as well as interviews with participants and directors, were analyzed using the constant-comparison method (Glaser and Strauss, 1967; Strauss, 1987) to determine emerging themes, which were then tested against learning community characteristics discovered in a review of educational literature between 1966 and 1996 as a way of clarifying and validating the interpretation of the data. These emerging themes focus on the structures or frameworks which shape the MWP experience, such as rituals, relationships, interactions, and expectations. The results are offered in hopes that others may adapt successful elements of MWP in designing other professional development experiences for teachers in order to support them as they inquire into their instructional practices.

In the sections which follow, then, I first will show that the Midwestern Writing Project is indeed a learning community, using criteria suggested by the National Institute of Education's Study Group of the Conditions of Excellence (in White, 1989). Then I will describe facets of MWP which seem to support the development of community during the Summer Institute, illuminating those themes with findings discovered in a review of literature on learning communities. Finally I will suggest how the structures of MWP might be adapted to create similar professional development experiences for teachers who are interested in improving their classroom teaching, using examples from an outreach effort of MWP which is trying to do just that.

How a Writing Project Fits the NIE's (1984) Criteria for a Learning Community

Applying the National Institute of Education's (1984) general criteria for a learning community (common themes, sense of purpose, reduced isolation, increased faculty-student interaction, continuity and integration in the curriculum, and group identity and cohesion) is an easy fit for Writing Projects.

Common theme and sense of purpose: As a part of a national network, MWP inherently focuses on a common theme—writing—and a sense of purpose—to support teachers' efforts to become more effective in the teaching of it. A set of corollaries from the National Writing Project guides the work of member sites:

Basic Assumptions of the National Project Model

- Programs designed to improve the teaching of writing should involve teachers at all grade levels and from all subject areas.

- Classroom practice and research have generated a substantial body of knowledge on the teaching of writing.

- Change can best be accomplished by those who work in the schools, not by transient consultants who briefly appear, never to be seen again, and not by packets of teacher-proof materials.

- The intuitions of teachers can be a productive guide for field-based research, and practicing teachers can conduct useful studies in their own classrooms.

- Teachers of writing must write themselves.

- The writing problem affects both the universities and the schools. This common problem can best be solved through cooperative, planned university-school programs.

- Student writing can be improved by improving the teaching of writing, and the best teacher of teachers is another teacher.

The MWP Summer Institute is also based on National Writing Project guidelines specific to Institutes:

- Individual or group interviews guide the selection process.

- Participants present 75- to 90-minute teacher demonstrations which are coached ahead of time and evaluated or reviewed afterward.

- Writing response groups meet two or three times a week for extended lengths of time.

- Teachers have opportunities for daily writing and writing to learn during the Institute itself, not just at home.

- Teacher writing is published.

- Teachers have opportunities to study, discuss research, and read about the teaching of writing.

- There is an emphasis on tapping teacher knowledge and successful teaching practices.

- There is an emphasis on helping teachers become teacher consultants.

The examples selected for the remainder of this paper will demonstrate that all of these criteria are met in the MWP Summer Institute.

Reduced isolation: The Writing Project design promotes a reduction in teacher isolation, a factor of learning communities identified by Cox (1993), Boyd and Hord (1994), as well as the National Institute of Education's Study Group of the Conditions of Excellence (in White, 1989). Leaders, called directors, work as a team to plan and direct an intensive Summer Institute, the primary effort of every NWP site, to support teachers as they inquire into their own practices and prepare to take leadership roles to support change among colleagues in their schools. At the Midwestern Writing Project, the director, co-director, and two associate directors collaborate to organize a four-week Institute. The associate directors at MWP are selected through an interview process; they must have previously completed the Invitational Summer Institute, and often represent different areas of expertise (a range of levels—primary, intermediate, middle school, high school—and/or of content areas). Teachers who participate in the Institute are called "Fellows" of the Project; those who move into leadership roles are called TCs (teacher consultants). All enjoy the privileges associated with membership in a nearly 300-member local network, including opportunities for advanced studies and a wide variety of leadership opportunities. The co-director, also an MWP Fellow, generally serves for several years and shares responsibility with the director for organizing all aspects of the Institute, selecting associate directors, reviewing applications by prospective Fellows, and planning changes in approach from year to year. Fellows from prior Institutes interview applicants and recommend those teachers who seem ready to take a leadership role in the teaching of writing.

At the end of each Institute, directors distribute materials from other local, state, and national professional organizations and encourage teachers to attend conferences, to propose conference sessions, and to write for local and state educational publications.

Increased faculty-student interaction: Time is one of the primary ways MWP increases director-Fellow interaction, or what might be compared to faculty-student contact. As the director explained,

> We've learned that you can't change teachers' attitudes, much less their way of teaching, with a three-day workshop. You can make them think about new things, but you aren't going to make a real difference in their classrooms in that short a period of time. One of the things that makes [MWP] work so well is that it's really dense and prolonged: it's total immersion. You can't go away from it and not improve your teaching (MWP, 1996-1997, 4-5).

The schedules of Institutes are intense. The MWP Summer Institute meets daily for four weeks in the summer from 9 am to 3:30 pm. Directors sit among the Fellows and participate fully in any discussions and activities designed for the group when they are not actively presenting. They float among small groups to assist and share. They also coach Fellows, one to one, on demonstrations of best practice that Fellows will present during the course of the Institute.

Student-to-student (or Fellow-to-Fellow) contact is also fostered by the design of the Project experience. Typically in the MWP, Fellows sit at tables of 3-4. They are encouraged not to "nest" but rather to find a new place to sit each day in order to get to know everyone in the group. The one-hour break in the middle of the day leads to informal connections being developed over lunch. Participants are encouraged to bring their lunches (refrigerators and a microwave are available), although some elect to leave the site to get fast food or eat out. Groups naturally form among those who prefer one or the other.

Formal structures for helping Fellows connect with one another include peer response groups, which meet almost daily to share drafts of their writing, and peer teaching, which takes the form of the best practice demonstrations. Not only do Fellows share what works for them with the other MWP participants, they often are paired or grouped with other Fellows who are demonstrating similar strategies. In such cases, Fellows spend time during and outside of the Institute working together to prepare and, later, debrief their presentations.

Continuity and integration in the curriculum: Continuity of learning is promoted through the intensive nature of the experience, 122 hours over four weeks of concentrated reading, writing, thinking, and talking about the teaching of writing. During the following school year, four meetings are scheduled to provide teachers an opportunity to connect their classroom teaching with the Institute experience. At these follow-up meetings, plans for the required portfolio of teacher writings are made, and professional experiences are shared.

The approach is also an integrated one, geared to P-12 teachers and emphasizing the applications of general principles to all age and ability levels. It is also an interdisciplinary experience. Teachers come from all content areas to learn to teach writing by writing. Best practice in teaching writing is promoted as applicable to writing in all settings.

Within the context of the Institute, directors frequently refer to the building blocks provided by demonstrations and book talks that Fellows have shared with the group, building blocks which help the group move to more complex issues. For example, a director might open a session by listing all the things the Fellows have done which have something to contribute to the presentation she was about to make. Such a statement helps develop an awareness that participants are constructing knowledge together rather than receiving it from an authority source.

Group identity and cohesion: Group identity comes in part from the practice of identifying MWP Summer Institute Fellows by their Project years. Teachers who participated in the first Institute are still called "MWP I-ers" and those in the current year at "MWP XVs"

because the MWP site is 15 years old. Co-directors and associate directors are introduced by their Project years—MWP X, MWP XIV, and MWP VII. MWP visitors are similarly identified. It's become traditional, at the Institute's closing dinner, to give each Fellow a mug from a local stoneware company which bears the MWP logo and the appropriate Roman numerals. In the MWP network newsletter, all Fellows are identified by Project year (XIII, II, IV, etc.) At MWP network functions, it's customary to have Fellows stand with their Project year Fellows in an informal competition to see which group is best represented. Several groups have had t-shirts printed with their Project year and participants' names. Others have formed on-going writing response groups. One has held its own writing retreats.

The sense of identity is also enhanced by the selectiveness of MWP. Only twenty teachers in an eight-county area are invited to participate in MWP each year. This lends an air of exclusivity to the experience, as does the application and interview process. While applicants must have a strong recommendation from their principals even to be interviewed, to be chosen means to have been judged to be a successful teacher by other teachers.

Group cohesiveness is something that directors intentionally promote. From day one, there is talk about how teachers develop into a community over a period of four weeks. The shared experiences and commonality of purpose contribute to this, as do a number of informal structures that contribute to a feeling of community. Following the directors' lead on the first day, participants take turns bringing treats. Conversations over coffee and bagels as Fellows move into writing promote group interaction. An opening dinner, a potluck at midpoint, and a closing dinner take advantage of the cohesiveness that comes from sharing meals, as does the unguided lunch bunch grouping.

Another structure of the MWP Institute which seems to contribute to the cohesiveness of the group is the mailbox. Each person has a space in a large cardboard box with many dividers. The slots are marked by name and participants are encouraged to send notes of support and thanks to other Fellows. Directors model this by writing to each Fellow one or more times during the Institute. On the first day of the MWP Institute, each new Fellow receives a sealed letter from a member of the prior Project, welcoming him or her to the network or sharing good wishes for a successful experience. In MWP XV, one of the associate directors introduced mailboxes by focusing on the word "connections" and making special mention of the many MWP connections which led him to apply for the Summer Institute last year and then for the assistant director's position this year. This kind of comment is intentional; directors make a point of trying to foster cohesiveness with the MWP network, as well as within the particular Project group. The MWP Advanced Institute (for teachers who have already completed the Summer Institute) meets three days during the Summer Institute, another intentional way to promote a sense of identity among the new MWP Fellows and help them feel connected to the larger network of teachers. Articles in the NWP *Quarterly* written by other MWP teachers are recommended to the group. Activities of other MWP Fellows are mentioned, as appropriate; when a Fellow reviewed a book by Shelley Harwayne the director talked about the school Shelley started which has a staff made up entirely of Writing Project teachers, and mentioned that MWP had sent two Fellows to hear her when she

visited a nearby university.

Cohesion is also fostered through celebrations. Shortly before the closing dinner, Fellows are invited to join in the fun by preparing pieces of writing, skits, songs, or other contributions to "make it your night." Such items are often closely allied with experiences and inside jokes particular to an Institute, and may further solidify Fellows' sense of oneness.

Because these elements—common theme, sense of purpose, reduced isolation, collegial "faculty-student" relationships, continuity and integration of learning, group identity and cohesion—are all woven into the structure of the MWP Institute experience, it seems clear that MWP is indeed a learning community. It is also a highly effective one, according to surveys of nearly 200 Fellows. In every year for which data has been preserved (1987 to present), teachers unanimously rate MWP as the most meaningful professional development experience they have ever had (MWP Annual Reports). It does indeed support teachers as they make changes in their teaching of writing. If we are to capitalize on the success of such a model and to use its lessons in designing other professional development experiences which support improvement in teachers' practices, there is much more we need to know about the MWP learning community. The analysis which follows is designed to explore structures of MWP which may contribute to the development of community.

Facets of the MWP Model Which Promote Community

Characteristics of the Learning Community

Size: For a learning community to be effective, reducing the size of the school or group may be required (Copa and Pease, 1992). In MWP, about 20 Fellows are chosen for each Summer Institute. If a Fellow has to drop out, even before the first day of the Institute, he or she is not replaced, as it might disrupt the process of building community in the group. Although the selection process is often complicated by the fact that there may be 3 or 4 teachers for every slot, there is no interest in expanding to meet the demand. Even if money were not a factor (much of the MWP budget pays for 6 hours of tuition for each Fellow), the size of the group would not be increased beyond 22 or 23 because it would lose its intimacy (another factor of learning communities identified by Fine (1992)). Instead, MWP is trying to increase capacity through an outreach program, a 3-hour graduate course offered during the school year which focuses on teachers who want to improve their teaching of writing but who may have no aspirations for leadership.

Nurturing environment: Wilcox and Ebbs (1992) suggest that the environment of a learning community emphasizes human dignity, nourishes growth and achievement, and fosters respect of others. Boyd and Hord (1994) similarly describe learning communities as providing a caring and productive environment. Data from this study shows that MWP attempts to create such an environment and that participants reflect positively on the role that the environment plays in their development as Project teachers. For example, although participants earn six hours of

graduate credit for the Summer Institute and follow-up sessions, the structure of the experience is not like that of a typical university class. The group meets off campus in a nearby elementary school in order to provide ample space for the major activities Fellows will engage in: writing on laptop computers, conferring in small groups about their writing, and reading independently from professional books gathered in a corner of the main room. Creature comforts are addressed as well; in the main room there is a buffet table of fruits, vegetables, and carbohydrates for breakfast and snacks throughout the day; a commercial coffee machine and hot water for tea; a sink and small refrigerator; and easy access to restrooms and telephone. Technological support is provided in the main room or in an adjoining workroom via a high-quality overhead projector, TV/VCR and professional tapes for viewing and a video camera for taping one's presentations, several computer printers, a photocopying machine, and a table full of writing supplies and materials for making group presentations. A graduate student is available full-time to make copies, run errands, and serve as general clerical assistant to all the participants in the Project. Having personal and professional materials and services at hand seems to make participants feel more like professionals; it fosters a sense of self worth. Fellows compare the environments of business vs school and find that school environments usually lack the perquisites that businessmen and women take for granted, and sometimes lack equipment and materials necessary to accomplish the tasks at hand.

The component of the Project experience which is most geared toward nourishing growth and achievement among Fellows is the demonstration. As in most learning communities, learning is based on life experience (Valli, 1994); in this case, it is the experience in one's professional life which is valued. All Fellows are expected to demonstrate an aspect of good writing practice that works in their classrooms. This serves to validate teachers' classroom experiences and to make overt a developing knowledge base about the teaching of writing. The directors coach Fellows as they develop and hone their demonstrations, guiding them to discover what is good about their practices and why they work. In every Institute, Fellows prepare rationales which tie practice to theory, often reading many professional articles and books to help understand why certain activities help kids write or write better. Debriefing of demonstrations also fostered the development of respect. Instead of critiquing Fellows' efforts, directors lead the group in discussing what they saw that they would like to replicate in their own demos. The completion of the demo is often celebrated as a rite of passage in the group. In some MWP cohorts, presentation of an MWP button followed the demo, signifying that the Fellow was now a bonafide MWP Project teacher. In MWP XV, however, the pins were saved until all Fellows had completed their demos, making the celebration more of a community event.

A nurturing environment also depends on the relationships between participants, which will be explored in detail below. One strategy which fostered the development of such an environment was setting clear expectations. In sharing the norms of the Institute, directors both described and, for the most part, modeled expectations engendering mutual respect: "If you come in after 9:00 you will be very, very quiet and will not disturb the people who are already working" and "We're all reading now; if you need to talk, go elsewhere" were typical statements designed to elicit cooperation and respectful interactions among participants.

Rituals and Norms: Geltner (1994) has found that communities develop through the establishment of rites and rituals. As has been described earlier, the structure of the Institute has a ritualistic quality in itself. The day begins with quiet writing on laptop computers for 10-15 minutes. No one makes an announcement; Fellows know after the first day that they are to come in quietly and get to work. Directors often model this by paying no attention to what else is going on and beginning to type immediately, although there were times when duties or emergencies superseded this plan. Sharing time followed, with one director taking responsibility to call the group to order and asking for a few Fellows to share out of their notebooks. This was generally not a problem-solving time, but rather a time for affirming writers as they began new topics and mused about what they might do with them. It also included sharing of community news regarding major or unusual events that had happened to the members since they last saw one another at 3:30 the day before, not because time was specifically taken for that, but because Fellows tended to write about what was going on in their lives.

Other rituals included the use of a small bell to call the group to order when transitions were made from independent time (such as the reading and writing blocks) to whole-group time; the playing of classical music during reading and writing blocks to mask outside noise and to set the tone for quiet work; the awarding of MWP buttons to signify the completion of the demo; the celebration of writing on the last day of the Institute during which each member reads a short piece of writing; spontaneous spoofs and writing games; the singing of "writing songs" at the closing dinner that use familiar tunes but MWP-specific lyrics; and the secretive writing by directors of a short humorous poem to recognize the special contributions of each Fellow (read as each came forward at the closing dinner to receive his or her MWP stoneware mug and certificate).

Establishing norms and rules, another facet of learning communities (Hazelwood and Roth, 1992), has been described earlier as part of the way the directors develop a nurturing environment. While the MWP writing workshop format honors individuality and diversity, there are also aspects of uniformity, common processes, and common beliefs. One of the norms that the director feels somewhat frustrated about is the expectation she has labored to develop that notebook pieces begun during writing time are not fine writing or finished in any sense of the word. Yet when someone who is particularly good with words reads a poem or passage that just flows off the top of his or her head, the message Fellows get instead is that some people can write and others cannot.

The negative impact that this unspoken message makes surfaced in one session late in the Institute. The director opened the sharing by directing attention to various terms which describe writers' by their processes: chunker, incubator, outliner, explorer, or noter. "While we don't want to label ourselves as one kind of writer, some of you may have written that you engage in some of these processes. Incubators sit on the egg and hope it hatches and there's something alive there. We used to use the word "percolating" for that. I'm an explorer; I write pages and pages while I'm trying to discover what I want to write. I think it's a sign of low intelligence! I have to write everything down. I may not use it, but I don't want to lose it. Is anyone else like

me?"

One fellow expressed relief: "I thought I was having difficulty in doing this—now I know that I'm an explorer. That makes me feel better. I thought I had to say something deep and profound. There is a negative to writing together. You think everyone is onto hot stuff, and here I am writing, 'well, they finally finished the roof.'"

Social construction of knowledge: Sparks (1994) notes that members of learning communities collaborate to make meaning. The National Writing Project Model endorses the notion that the intuitions of teachers can effectively guide field-based research, and that practicing teachers can conduct useful studies in their own classrooms. Teachers sharing their own best practice is a key feature of Writing Project Summer Institutes. The demonstration is the most powerful example of this in MWP. Directors coached Fellows to weave their questions into their demos, providing an opportunity for the entire cohort to focus on the less satisfactory aspects of a particular practice in order to improve it. For example, a high school teacher proposed to share a writing activity focusing on organizational skills that had worked well in her classroom. In discussing the activity privately with the teacher, a director pointed out that writing for a teacher audience is problematic if we believe that students write best when they have authentic audiences and purposes for writing. The teacher was encouraged to share the activity in her demo as she had actually used it, but to enlist the help of the group in devising authentic audiences for the final piece of writing, which was originally a letter in which the student introduced himself or herself to the teacher. The Fellows responded with a variety of ideas: change the audience to classmates and publish the collection of letters as a way of developing a sense of community; develop a handbook for new students introducing them to their classmates; have students write a follow-up piece in which they compare and contrast how they've changed over the year; incorporate these introductions into letters of advice to next year's classes from this year's students; use them in a "Student of the Week" bulletin board display; publish student profiles periodically in the PTSA newsletter; or add pictures and publish a freshman class memory book. Interestingly, the only suggestion which did not address the teacher audience concern (to have students write a follow-up piece in which they compare and contrast how they've changed over the year) was not challenged. This suggests support for the notion that, in learning communities, authority for knowing is internal and collective (Wilcox and others, 1991).

Other times, directors introduced common problems for group contemplation. "After I read Brad's story about killing a deer, I got a lot of deer stories. Does that happen to you? How do we handle that? Help me out." Fellows responded with tactics they have used. One suggested that it would be a great lesson on voice if a lot of kids did write on killing a deer; comparing the various stories would make clear a difficult concept. Another Fellow said that we have to get them to see the small things in their notebooks that have universal meaning. "I tell them it has to be something bigger than the experience itself, if they're going to write about it. Our job is to conference with them, asking the important questions; and teaching them to conference with each other to find those important things." A director reminded the group that the biggest ideas, the most important things, can come in the smallest of moments. "I don't want

them to think it always has to be the shocking event in their lives that they write about." With this comment, she illuminated a perspective that Fellows agreed they could take into their classrooms and that could make a difference in the kinds of topics their students felt were legitimate to write about.

Another way this social construction of knowledge operated was in modifying accepted practices based on Fellows' experiences. Conferencing questions are readily available in all manner of teaching materials and writing books. Through discussion, the group came to wonder if offering these en masse didn't defeat the purpose. Instead of using the questions, students tended to ignore them. The group decided it might be more effective to give students one or two appropriate questions to ask in any one session. Then they have focus and may receive better feedback. The issue of revision was another issue that the group tackled, particularly the notion that revision is beyond the capabilities of younger students. "The part [of the book] that really bothered me was in assessing stories. The author, Jenkin, seemed to feel students couldn't revise before grade 5 and that bed-to-bed stories were all you could expect. . . . The lack of high expectations bothered me." A director asked, "How do you account for your students being able to do these things? Was there something about the school Jenkin was in?" "No, I think it's because we embraced primary [years ago] and have been writing all along." The discussion was picked up again the next day when the director shared that she was writing about whether primary kids ought to be able to revise. "I usually say they are too egocentric. I think they are able to write a thank-you to a specific person but imagining an audience may not come till later [and that is a key element in being able to revise—being able to imagine an audience's needs]. "I've even said to primary people not to expect their students to revise. One Fellow determined to disprove me." She told about observing a kindergarten teacher who wrote a story about her Christmas light necklace; she purposefully made errors about the colors and number of bulbs on it. The children spontaneously and vocally offered revisions. "So I had to agree that they could indeed revise for accuracy. Another teacher brought me evidence from a girl who was in love with the cross-out. Then one time I observed a pair of young boys reading their stories to one another. The listener said, 'That part goes at the end.' The writer said, 'Oh, NO!' and slapped his jaws. 'You mean I have to write it all over?' The other one ran and got the scissors and did a cut-n-paste. It was wonderful."

At the end of the Institute, Fellows were asked to write reflectively and then to meet in grade level groups (one of the few times during these four weeks that they did so) to consider what was the heart of their teaching and what they would take with them from the Institute that was compatible with the "core" of their classroom practice. Primary, intermediate, middle and high school teachers shared and collectively analyzed, synthesized, and evaluated Writing Project experiences to discover what was important for them and their students. "You can't do it all, just keep striving to be better," remarked the director. "At Saturday meetings, we'll have a chance to check on each other and what is happening."

Primary teachers, for example, discovered that the heart of their teaching was creating a family in the classroom, providing reading and writing support, and nurturing independent

learners. Next steps include figuring out how to manage a reading-writing workshop in which teachers of writing are writers. They planned to model writers' notebooks, how to share, how to listen to a partner, how to use folders—"teaching them how to start right 'down there.'" The primary teachers also planned to continue meeting independently as they make changes in their classrooms, a further opportunity for them to continue constructing knowledge as they reflected on their practice.

Intermediate teachers wanted to take with them the notion of the classroom as a caring community: "We will establish a caring community of learners which includes our students, our teachers, and ourselves." To them this meant a comfortable space, a climate of respect and encouragement, and real choice and real audiences and purposes in a reading-writing workshop. They also hoped to use ideas they'd gleaned on organization, response groups, mini lessons, writing in the content areas, questioning, theme immersion with student input and accountability, collaborating with the primary and ECE teachers, and reading professionally.

Middle school teachers wanted to pursue how to keep the fire in writers' notebooks. They concluded that students need freedom of choice in their writing and their journal writing and hoped to support them through mini lessons connected to context of their writing. High school teachers talked about not teaching writing but writers; finding a rhythm for the day and for the year, sticking with reading-writing workshop rather than digging for something "new" to "do," and modeling peer response and reflective writing.

A real turning point in the development of MWP as a learning community came when Fellows challenged an assistant director, demonstrating that they now understood that knowledge in MWP is not handed down from an authority. The assistant director was winding down a major presentation on reading-writing workshops, basing it on his own classroom practices, of course. In explaining his requirements, two elementary teachers picked up on the fact that while there are stringent requirements for number and types of writing pieces for all students, reading requirements vary from student to student and are calculated based on a timed reading. "Why not reflect varying abilities in your expectations for writing as you do for reading? I have some kids who would have no difficulty producing 12 pieces and others who would really struggle with that. You don't find that inconsistent?" The director replied that he did not; another Fellow jumped in to say, "I always try to make that space for those who are trying something really new to them, because their writing breaks down and things get very messy; yet while they *could* produce 12 unchallenging kinds of writing, I want them to stretch themselves." "Well, I'll have to think about that," the director replied. Another director challenged him as well: "It does make a statement, though, that writing is the work part and reading is the fun part. It brings up a very good question; should they be consistent? It might not mean that writing becomes less structured (as ____ seems to be pushing for). It could also mean that the reading part had more guidelines." A high-school level Fellow also expressed concern and challenged him to realize he was being subjective in his valuing of the 12 but not the one struggling reflection. "I had to face this same issue recently and back off the English department's decision to fail all who hadn't completed a writing folder; the office said it was not fair [for these same kinds of reasons]." The director who

had been challenged referred to the arguments at a later date, and thanked the Fellows for challenging his thinking and helping him grow as a teacher.

Multiple perspectives: One tenet of the National Writing Project is that teachers draw from a large body of classroom practice and research to support their work in teaching writing. This correlates with the literature of learning communities; effective ones seem not to espouse a single way of knowing or doing (Wilcox and others, 1991). Rather, diverse talents and ways of knowing are respected (Ritschel, 1995). This position is vigorously endorsed by the MWP director. Teachers were encouraged to combine demonstrations on similar topics, for example, in order to show a variety of ways to deal with audience and purpose, or poetry writing, or publication, etc. After a flurry of interest by several Fellows in presenting a lesson from the book of a popular author of revision tips, the director gently explained that Writing Project teachers don't promote the strategies of any one author or publishing group. Instead, they look to their own practice and are informed by it and by reading widely about issues and questions that are generated by their teaching. "Besides," she added, "his book is nothing new; these are the same kinds of things we've all been doing for years. He just has clever names for them." Later, in revisiting this point, she explained, "If you've only read one book, you're going to think it's wonderful, even if [the same strategies are] in 19 others."

Another director described her use of a writer's notebook, a freewriting tool that has, in many classrooms, replaced the daily teacher prompt on the chalkboard. "I store everything here—newspaper articles, pictures, things I've printed out, things I've started and may never finish, notes made during a sermon, in the car...It really is a treasure chest for me, but it's raw, it's very raw, it's bare bones." She described how she and her students use their writers' notebooks to discover topics and snippets that may become finished pieces of writing some day. This practice is theoretically aligned with the research of Britton *et al* (1975) that has helped shape current writing pedagogy—i.e., that all writing comes from expressive roots. Writers' notebooks are a staple of many Project leaders' classrooms, a physical representation of the belief that good writing comes from topics students care about; these are often discovered in the contexts of their own lives. Then she went on to say that while "it's natural to write about our personal lives, sometimes I need prompts to write outside myself. And I've used prompts with students; sometimes they've needed them, too." In this sentence, this director legitimized using what works from a variety of perspectives, by describing her simple rationale and explaining why both could operate side by side in her classroom.

This acceptance of "multiple ways of doing" even carried over into the expectations for the daily log. Each Fellow was asked to take a turn, but the expectation was set by the director that no two logs would use the same format. "The log is highly individual. It can take any form that you like, but needs to be a highly accurate representation of what goes on because we don't all want to be taking notes all the time. . . This is last summer's log. You'll see what I meant by 'every day will be different and individual.'" While a framework for book reviews was distributed and a model suggested in recent issues of the MWP newsletter, a similar expectation was set for the book reviews each Fellow would give: "They'll be very different, very personal."

That being said, although individual voices came through in the comments and styles that Fellows used, most loggers followed the format established by the initial volunteer. Interestingly, Fellows also tended to model their efforts after the first booktalk and the first demo. Directors also applied subtle pressures to adopt certain MWP norms. The directors modeled bringing simple snacks for the treat table; jokingly, one said, "The first person who brings in quiche and eggs jalapeno has had it!" In talking about the plethora of materials they would accumulate, a director suggested keeping them in a 3-ring binder, divided by date. "You don't have to do that; you can be a slob. I'm the organized type myself." Another director, announcing the first freewriting time, quipped, "I get all cranky when people talk during writing time."

When a Fellow mentioned she wasn't sure she was ready to share a poem about the death of a loved one that she had just drafted, a director interjected, "Then don't! Take it to your response group and share it then in a more intimate setting instead." This kind of comment tended to be offered when Fellows wrote about topics that evoked strong emotional responses from the writers themselves. The message was overt: pieces of writing aren't ready to go public until you can talk about them as a writer rather than as a participant in the stories.

Relationships between Members in Learning Communities

Interdependent: In a learning community, learners realize their interdependence; they are responsible for one another (Toomey, 1993; Terenzini, 1992). The MWP structure most responsible for nurturing this interdependence is the response group. In MWP XV, participants met regularly with 2-3 other Fellows to share and discuss their writing. In some instances it became a form of cooperative learning, noted by Calderon (1991) as a characteristic of learning communities. Stronger writers would naturally model genres and strategies that other members could then emulate. Weaker writers became comfortable enough to ask for specific help in shaping, revising and editing their work before taking it to a more public arena.

"Sharing at the table" was a common strategy after group presentations, demos by directors, and, occasionally, writing or reading time. Directors either sat with their table mates or popped in on several groups' conversations. It served to build group cohesiveness by giving Fellows a chance to share their fears and concerns: "How do I get rid of those critical voices in my head?" asked one seasoned teacher. "I hate everything I write, and probably abandon it before I should." It allowed them to start applying strategies that had been modeled for them, and which they were intuitively expected to model for their students starting next fall: "Maybe you have a story there..."

Members share responsibility for teaching and learning in a learning community (Wilcox and others, 1991). This is made clear from the first day of the Institute: "We will expect you to share, for the most part, what you write," a director explained. After the first response groups met, one director's comment illustrated this sense of mutual accountability that is fostered in the MWP Summer Institute: "How much deeper our entries were because we were responsible to each other, knowing we were going to meet. I know I wouldn't have been thinking of another

audience [otherwise]." The structure of the Institute supports Fellows as they attempt to be responsible to one another; uninterrupted periods for writing are scheduled nearly every day, often an hour and a half at a time.

While most sharing occurred in the response groups, each morning there was also an opportunity to share with the whole group after a ten-minute writing time. The comfort zone for this sharing was fleshed out after one Fellow began crying as she read a piece she had just started drafting. This incident proved to be a defining moment for the community, one which was revisited several times before it was put to rest. But it illustrated that members realized their responsibility for mutual support in the response group setting. Attempting to make her feel more comfortable and save her from further embarrassment, several directors discouraged her from continuing, and talked about times that they were unable to share their writing. Later, the Fellow shared with her response group that she felt diminished by the reaction of the directors. "I don't feel safe in here anymore." Her empathetic response partners assured her that she could share anything and everything with them. "You're safe here, with us," one replied. The group proved to work very effectively together for the duration of the Institute, bonded perhaps by the shared secret. With the distance of time, the Fellow also came to realize that she may have overreacted to or even misinterpreted the incident. "I think I brought some hidden issues to that experience and projected some old feelings that really didn't belong there."

On the last day of the Institute, one of the members of that group shared publicly what she would miss about it: "people who have something to say, smiles that say 'I care,' the ah's when someone reads a piece...I'm amazed at the giftedness in this room. [I'll miss the] honesty, the confusion, the promises of expressive writings. I will miss the questions—'What is it you need from us, what will you do when you leave this response group?'" Another Fellow expressed it this way: "I have found I do need a response partner—this has been really gratifying for me; I've never had that kind of relationship before; it's a real discovery for me." Later that same day another Fellow admitted that a revision group makes such a major difference that, "well, I'm a little scared to get out of this Institute." The director replied that she should keep her group together. "Yes, that's kind of what I'm saying. I don't know who would be interested in continuing—but we have developed a bond."

Egalitarian and Collegial: Nelson (1993) describes the relationship between learning community participants as collegial and egalitarian. This fits the MWP Summer Institute in a variety of ways. All members address one another by first name, with the occasional exception of the director, especially early in the Institute since some know her as a university professor; she is also clearly the matriarch of the Project. All Fellows are expected to share in the work of the Institute—providing morning snacks, taking turns keeping the daily log, bringing in taped music for writing time, supplying cords and computers for teachers who don't have access to laptops. Directors are expected to model everything that Fellows are expected to do, especially in giving book talks and demonstrating best practice. In fact, the only activity that directors did not participate in during the Institute was the log, probably because there were not enough days to give everyone a turn.

Implicit in an egalitarian relationship in a learning community is the notion that teachers and learners are co-learners. While it was clear behind the scenes that directors were learning, it may not have been clear to participants that all continue to inquire. More apparent was that directors were not positioning themselves as more able writers than the teachers they were working with. They asked for help, and made public their progress: "I'm on the 91st version of the tropical fish poem and isn't about fish anymore. I've taken the advice you gave me about the $25,000 bequest but am not done with it."

Trusting: Learning communities are based on trust, openness, risk-taking, and feedback (True and Kepes, 1970); they practice the art of transparency (McEwan, 1993); there is a shared vulnerability (Short, 1992). Perhaps because writing is such a personal form of communication, revealing so much about us that might otherwise stay hidden, this issue hit home on the first day. During the first 10-minute freewriting, one Fellow wrote about this vulnerability involved in sharing one's writing. She shared it with the whole group in a debriefing session afterward: "It seems I've been waiting for this all my life; but how do we shed these protective shields and become like family in four short weeks?" Interestingly, Lynn (1985) asserts that learning communities are "family-like groupings," in part because of this deeper level of communication and commitment.

One of the best examples of this trusting and transparency occurred in the third week of the Institute, when Fellows were asked to share what they had been writing about so far. While some shared "happy" news—"I'm full of enthusiasm; I finally feel I'm getting some where." "I'm excited about doing something together with _____ on our children because she's looking ahead and I'm looking back." "I want my name in print; I want to send something off and get my first rejection slip."—they also spoke about their problems. The following comments were made by Fellows during that session: "Most of my writing is family-related; I'm using it for therapy to get things off my chest." "I'm really searching for direction," said another. A Fellow who was adopted as a child described how it is to work on an adolescent novel about a kid who's been adopted. A Fellow who rarely shared during the Institute explained, "I've been in a soul-searching mode. I'm a big crier and I keep switching to other things. Crying topics keep coming back, so I've written my mom a couple of letters about my wedding, a poem for 2 voices. It has helped me come to terms with myself; I told her I hated her as a teen."

"I've decided to celebrate the positive things in my life," said one who had struggled with darker topics early in the Institute. "I started a piece today about the Sunday School ladies in my grandmother's class. That's such a shift in focus in how I've seen my life." "I've been struggling with poetry, because I haven't felt very confident in it. I'm trying to find my voice in poetry," shared an assistant director. Another director admitted, "I'm a sitter; I need to get moving next week, but I'm not going to be angry if I let some pieces sit till later."

One of the most experienced writers in the group surprised the others when she said, "This is really hard for me. I've been able to talk about everything in front of you without being nervous. But this . . . . I can write academic pieces really well, but my stuff is just crap in

comparison to _____'s and _____'s pieces." Other Fellows tried to rescue her: "I think many of us feel the same. I thought my story was pretty good until I heard _____." The writer being referred to responded: "I can relate; I have real trouble with professional writing, the precise, concise writing. You clearly haven't read some of the junk that's in my writer's notebook. I'm not a very good reviser. I'm very good at pouring things on the page in the beginning, but I have 7 poems that I'm having trouble making them mean something. I'm attempting to work on 3 personal narratives that I'm not sure I'll finish next week because I do such a poor job revising. I think I start well but others surpass me. The last reaction I would want you to have is that my stuff is so good that it makes you want to stop writing. Makes me think I shouldn't even model for my kids." The director suggested that they should instead work with each other, because each is an expert in the type of writing that's hard for the other one. "A great writer has wide control over language—to write for the widest audiences in the most genres [is the real sign of greatness]." Why do teachers feel comfortable enough to admit their failings? Perhaps vulnerability is reduced when it is admitted.

Caring and respecting: In a learning community, members care about one another as learners and as individuals (Lipsitz, 1995; Toomey, 1993). There is mutual respect and cooperation (Wilcken, 1992). Caring is demonstrated in the investment that MWP Fellows make in one another's success during the Institute. It is one which MWP directors model and MWP Fellows adopt. In the first discussion of demonstrations, the director promised that everyone would "clap loudly and reinforce you in whatever way we can." The enthusiasm of the group's response to demos by their peers was one measure of this. Afterward, the first presenter thanked them: "You are a gracious audience, good listeners, and very supportive." Participants demonstrate they are invested in the success of each individual in the group by engaging in serious conversations about the process or topic at hand, making connections to their own teaching, suggesting alternatives, and sending congratulatory notes to the presenters.

Role of the Teacher or Facilitator

"Standard-Bearer": The leader of a learning community bears the responsibility for maintaining standards, tapping each individual's full mental capacity and evoking the highest levels of quality, performance, and productivity (Martel, 1993). The MWP director takes such an expectation seriously; at one of the last meetings of the MWP XV Summer Institute, she spoke at length of the responsibility she feels in maintaining the vision of the National Writing Project in all that this site does: "I'm the one that knows these things in my heart and soul; while it isn't necessary that others know these principles, I'm the one that writes the annual report to get our money. I'm the one who decides whether things we might do are appropriate, I'm the one who knows them in her heart and soul. I'm the keeper of the NWP flame."

The director would sometimes stop Fellows in the midst of presentations because of her desire that they meet standards, follow established criteria, or demonstrate exemplary performance. Sometimes it was just a matter of condensing to fit prescribed time frames: "You're going to go far too long if you use that kind of detail for each book. Give us one sentence about

each of the others [in the trilogy]." Other times it was to correct misconceptions about writing and the teaching of writing. A Fellow shared, "I look at my revision in different levels. I always correct my spelling as soon as I see it. My hair went up when I saw [in the piece I was writing] '*Registar* for the next portion of the academic....' After I'm happy with the mechanics, and have eliminated the repeated expressions, I go on." The director replied, "It's interesting, but I don't know that you'd want to pass that on to your students. I do those things, too; I think of it as stalling, as I wait for something to come to me. We need to encourage going with the flow and not teach our own bad habits."

The director's demonstrations exemplified the high expectations for Fellows' work in the Institute. Handouts were both attractive and substantive, clearly explaining theoretical concepts and providing well-written samples of the concept at hand. In addressing the group, she used accessible examples and a conversational tone, setting the expectation that although the concept might be complicated, the group would master it and be able to apply it. She opened her demos by providing a sense of purpose for understanding and using the information which would follow. A good example is her presentation on The Writing Project Writing Experience, which she described as "the heart of the institute," transcribed below:

> The reason that I do this elaborate explanation of expressive, poetic, and transactive writing is that I think some people are using the term expressive writing incorrectly to mean any writing. Expressive writing is raw, off the top of your head, more or less. It is without concern for readers as much as possible. Even at your age, you have built in an awareness of your audience, whether you're writing for yourself or not. If you know anything about the art world, you've heard of expressionism and impressionism. I think it's a handy analogy. With impressionism, artists intended their work to make a certain impression on the viewer—much like transactive writing. Expressionism was a reflection of self, so you've got raw feelings on canvas. Who's an expert in art here who can explain it better? Oh, thank heavens, no one! When you put thoughts down in the morning [during our daily freewriting time], that is expressive writing. When you go back to it to see what you might do with it and who you might share it with, then you're moving to transactive. In poetic writing, you're creating a piece of art. You often have no idea who will be in your audience; maybe just a glimmer (such as if it's for young adults).
>
> I used to draw a heart and write "Expressive writing: The heart of all writing" with an arrow drawn to each side saying "transactive" and "poetic." Some people do a lot of this expressive writing in their heads. I wrote a book with a colleague who wrote and refined in her head; by the time she put it on paper, it was excellent and she rarely changed a word. I, on the other hand, filled yellow pages and chucked a lot of it to get to the core. We usually finished at the same time, but hers was spent largely in silence.

> We want you to write about your writing processes as well. The danger of that "in your head" stuff is that it's difficult for us to model for kids. We need to show them it takes work. Even when someone produces a gorgeous entry in 10 minutes, I never believe it can't be better. Some people are just good with words. We don't want students to get the idea that writing is a gift. We can all write to a certain minimal level. Yet if we jump right to a formal genre, we run the risk of producing something very sentimental and crappy because we haven't explored the complexity of our feelings. Writing expressively first gives us a lot more data to work with.

She followed with examples of two expressive entries from her own writer's notebook, asking Fellows to brainstorm where she might go with each. As they made suggestions, she guided them to see how certain entries lent themselves more to certain genres. She also modeled looking for ideas in tiny kernels—how even one word or phrase might suggest a piece of writing that goes far afield from the original entry.

Another way the director served as a standard-bearer was in raising questions. Directors' questions were geared to push Fellows' thinking and challenge their assumptions. This was particularly true when a Fellow made a statement which contradicted NWP philosophy or current notions of best practice. Terminology was one example: "Could we not call it [response groups] revision groups? We want to include opportunity to celebrate rather than just change one another's writing." When a professional book was described as "just" about writing, the director interjected, "Isn't it true, though, that anything that helps you understand your own writing better is about teaching?"

Catalyst and caretaker: A leader serves as a catalyst in linking relationships to form a learning community through formal and informal strategies, according to Moller (1993). The MWP director seems to intuitively focus her efforts on building community in the group. She was the only one of the directors who ate her lunch in the main room every day of the Institute, seeking out the company of Fellows and engaging them primarily in personal conversations rather than in professional ones. She drew out the more reserved teachers and made them aware of connections they have with other Fellows. She always plans a series of dinners—the opening dinner, a midpoint potluck, and a closing dinner—in part to cement relationships among the Fellows. It is her rule that Fellows seek new table companions each day of the Institute. In whole-group sharing sessions, the directors ask for different voices to be heard each time, which also has the effect of helping everyone know one another more deeply.

The pairing of Fellows to work together on demonstrations is one of several formal opportunities for collaboration which directors provide. They spend many hours mulling over Fellows' applications (which describe a possible demonstration topic) and reflecting on discussions about topics with Fellows at the pre-Institute meeting. While the pairing often is solely because the topics are similar, some collaborations are designed to help weaker or less experienced teachers learn from more able or more experienced ones.

Another intentional collaboration is in the formation of response groups, which again combined more able and less able writers. These have been described earlier as a key facet of the interdependence in learning community relationships.

Compass: Sergiovanni suggests that another duty of learning community leaders is to connect people morally to each other and to their work (1994). One way that this happened in MWP XV was in the setting of personal and professional boundaries in the learning community. The issue of how to deal with pieces that make their authors cry surfaced again a few days after it initially was addressed. A Fellow asked how to handle such situations in the response groups. The director's reply follows:

> Don't bring it to the group until you're ready to talk about the craft of it. They [the authors] want sympathy and help dealing with the pain, but we aren't therapists. The writer has to determine whether it's the experience or the writing that he/she is wanting to share. These are *writing* groups. Do I sound terrible? I cry as soon as any of the rest of you. But it puts your response partners in a difficult position; don't ask them to focus on your pain. It seems belittling to tell someone that the introductory paragraph needs to be rewritten when her mother has died six weeks ago....our comments trivialize the experiences of those who are writing about joy and pain.

The director also helped assistant directors keep their bearings during presentations. Even though these had been discussed in planning sessions beforehand, sometimes the point behind the demo got lost or obscured in the doing and discussing that sometimes took different directions because of the response of the group or the pressure of leading the group. She would ask leading questions which put the presentation back on track: "Don't you have some student work?" "What advice would you give us as we go into our notebooks now?" "Could we have more clarification as to what we might do with this idea?"

Nature of Learning in Learning Communities

Intellectual interaction: Learning communities encourage greater intellectual interaction between students, between students and faculty, and between faculty members than do traditional educational organizations (NIE in White, 1989). One of the primary purposes of the MWP Summer Institute, according to the director, is to provide opportunities for professional conversations. She believes MWP fills an important need in fostering interaction between teachers of like caliber who may not have collegial relationships in their schools.

In MWP, this intellectual interaction occurs during group sessions, such as the sharing time after morning writing time. An assistant director guided Fellows to talk specifically about the writing they were doing and to read lines out loud. "One of the things that's helpful to me is to hear what other people are doing, to hear their words." In the sharing, writers were affirmed and given the help they asked for, and the other Fellows had an array of new models for topics

and approaches that they, too, might try. For example, one Fellow said she was starting a series of "snippets" based on things she observed; she would later peruse her snippets to see if there were any which might be developed into pieces of writing. Today she had seen a homeless person and wondered what it would be like to have everything you own in a shopping cart. Another Fellow had taken the phrase "the hurried child" and switched the perspective to "the hurried adult." A third shared a metaphor around which she was focusing a poem about her daredevil teenage son: "We fear a short flame; we pray for a long steady one—hot, tempered, pure." Still another Fellow solicited suggestions for the kind of audience she might write a humorous piece for about her engineer husband who's likely to think about dishwasher pumps during romantic moments. Such an interaction is a daily ritual in the Institute. In a few minutes, participants had modeled for one another and brought their expertise to bear on the questions that writers had.

Another form of intellectual interaction occurred when the district's writing portfolio expert was brought in to answer Fellows' questions about the state writing assessment portfolio. (In grades 4, 7, and 12, students in this midwestern state must develop a writing portfolio containing 7 pieces of specific kinds of writing. These are scored holistically according to a detailed rubric as novice, apprentice, proficient, or distinguished writing.) What allowed this to be an intellectual interaction instead of a top-down sharing of expertise was that the consultant was not asked to make a presentation. Instead, Fellows' wrote down their questions about portfolio assessment over a period of more than a week. This allowed for reflection and preparation on the part of the Fellows. The consultant was given the questions ahead of time and was able to plan how she would respond and to bring relevant materials that would help meet the expressed needs. The teachers clearly were in control of the process.

This became even clearer as teachers presented a problem to her that they had discovered in the state assessment process: "Our portfolios are so much better but our scores are lower. I have a theory: Our expectations were low to begin with; now our expectations are higher." The consultant agreed: "The Distinguished exemplar from year one would not be scored distinguished now." The teacher continued her argument: "Our teachers see a real improvement [in students' writing] but scores don't reflect it. There is no recognition for students who are moving from the bottom of the apprentice category to the top of apprentice. We see the improvement, but the score doesn't show it. Of course it's wonderful that our standards have gone up . . . ." A director interjected: "I don't think it's the standards; I think if your main education has come through the scoring, it stands to reason that you knew less the first year; you've learned more how to apply the standards. We have better examples of how to reach [the standards] now." Another teacher took up the argument, "I think we're concerned that it be explained to parents so that they'll understand why we're not moving up, why we're in decline." The director concurred: "[They have to understand that] the goal is to assess the growth of the school, not of the student."

After the discussion had run its course, the consultant mentioned a conference on large-scale assessment she had attended recently and described how many other areas of the country are looking to our state for guidance. "I'm proud that we jumped in and took a risk; it's not perfect

yet, but at least we did something. If you have suggestions, you will be listened to, I promise. I carry tales. Or write to your regional consultants. Is there a way to viably assess progress? If you can think of a way to do this statewide, write it up. Maybe we could add an element to the score." She left the room to applause for a successful mini-in-service program. Fellows got the specific information they requested and, instead of feeling powerless about systems that needed revamping, expressed satisfaction that their concerns had been heard and taken seriously.

Non-traditional: Interaction is active and vocal in a learning community setting, not limited to the often mechanical and routinized interaction of traditional lectures, term papers, and examinations (NIE in White, 1989). Even though participants earn six hours of graduate education credit for the Summer Institute and follow-up sessions, the director follows the lead of the National Writing Project in describing MWP as an experience, not as a class. Whenever a Fellow would slip and refer to the Institute as a class, the director would feign offense and emphatically say, "It's NOT A CLASS!" The word "class" connotes lectures, papers, and tests, none of which apply to the Institute experience. Instead, Fellows write pieces that the directors never see, unless they are revised and polished for their portfolios. While every teacher is expected to read a professional book before the Institute begins and to give an oral review of the book during the Institute, no grades are given; the only feedback is the immediate discussion of issues raised or strategies shared. The director may question an interpretation or provide additional information, but the assumption is that teachers' professional interests will drive the activity. The premise seems to be that authentic reading and writing needs no external motivation, an assumption that is corroborated by Cohen (1995), who asserts that learning in a learning community is intrinsically motivated (Cohen, 1995). Fellows are all expected to produce a written review of the book they presented orally for publication to a larger audience in the MWP newsletter; while some may need an extra reminder or two, they all turn in the reviews. The atmosphere, rather than the credit or the grade, seems to stimulate Fellows to work during the Institute: "For the first time in my life, I don't want to stop writing."

The interdependence of the response group also seems sufficient to keep Fellows writing and sharing their work. A framework for group process is provided: (1) Each takes a turn sharing a piece. (2) The partners ask what the writer wants of them. (3) At the end of the session, each is asked what they will do when they leave the group that day. Other spontaneous questions are asked as well, of course, suggesting that a collaborative process drives the group. "Response groups help me focus," said a Fellow. Another shared that her best work to date "was a notebook entry that turned into how to plant a wildflower garden—the help I got from my group was great because they had never done that and had all kinds of questions that made it a better article—normally I only get response from myself." An assistant director explained how questions from his response group on a specific notebook entry led to a particularly powerful piece of writing; the power is actually a tribute to them. "I was able to find the piece in the revelation I had, but it was their questions which evoked the revelation."

Collaborative: Teaching and learning is collaborative in a learning community (Wilcox and others, 1991; Cohen, 1995; Sparks, 1994; Leto, 1995). Learners discover and construct

knowledge together (Kelder, 1992); they share their ideas, expertise, and vulnerability (Short, 1992). In MWP, there are a variety of structures which promote these collaborative ventures. The demonstration is one with several levels of teaching and learning. Fellows collaborate with one another in planning to teach a demonstration lesson as a model of what works in their classrooms and that other Fellows may emulate. Directors collaborate with Fellows to inquire into the theoretical stance behind the practice and to shape the presentation into a tight professional package. Fellows engage the group in learning about the strategy. And, as has been mentioned earlier, the entire group contributes alternative strategies from their own practice and reading to build on the presentation.

The efforts of two high school English teachers demonstrate this collaborative cycle. Although this was their first experience collaborating on a professional presentation, their demonstration itself was about the ways they collaborate with students and teachers to develop poems. In the course of the presentation, Fellows were engaged in trying different aspects rather than simply listening to a description of the activities students participated in. One presenter worked with an art teacher to arrange collaborations between English and art students. Writers created poetry in response to art, then art students created paintings in response to the poems. Their paintings were shared with the poets, who in turn wrote letters to the artists to ask what in the poem inspired specifics of the painting. Students received gentle criticism via their responses and came to understand that artists' interpretations differed from the poets' interpretations because of their word choice; they realized that they needed to consider their words carefully to create the intended meaning.

Discussion of this project led to collaborative meaning-making among the Fellows as they considered the kinds of learnings that students might experience. Interestingly, another layer of collaboration, the students' construction of knowledge, was also described; in answering whether or not students learned about the suggestive nature of poetry though the artistic rendition, she replied, "Some did. Some became angry. That became a good discussion starter [for the writers' to ponder], especially regarding the fact that poetry strives for multiple meanings, while prose does not..."

This discussion eventually moved into spontaneous suggestions by other Fellows—another form of collaborative meaning-making—of alternate ways to organize and refine this project. "I think a really neat thing to add next year is to let art students submit painting to the poet and let the poet respond to give each side the opportunity to see how their work is interpreted." "I've done this with the poet serving as his or her own artist." "I have a great poem you could use to help the poets understand how the artists might feel; it's about someone whose art is unappreciated."

Her partner then had the group do something else with the entries they had written during the demonstration. Lines were contributed by a variety of Fellows, producing this first draft of a collaborative poem:

Looking through a peephole
No renovations
I see the door as a barrier
Men in white beards live in cool vacuumed rooms
Harsh illusion
Missed opportunities
Who can go in?
Let me in!
I'll take any job, hungry
Doesn't anyone care

He explained that he typically doesn't tell the class that they're creating a poem; he just asks for a line from each person and even plays devil's advocate when someone says it's a poem. "That keeps students from constraining themselves with rhyme and line length." He then described how he invites students to create their own versions of the class poem by cutting, adding, or rearranging words, and talked about getting them to go beyond surface changes. Another Fellow interjected "ARMS," an acronym meaning "arrange, revise, move, substitute." A director shared a term coined by a Fellow from a previous Institute: "big scissors," meaning "cut wide and deep."

A second version of the class poem was quickly drafted. The group made numerous suggestions for alternate ways to arrange the lines as well as alternate ways to use the strategy, including pairing students to revise and share their versions and putting lines on index cards so they can be moved around easily.

Vulnerability (Short, 1992) is another thing that Fellows share in the demonstrations. The prospect of sharing an example of best practice from one's classroom is daunting to many Fellows. For this reason, in MWP XV demos were scheduled atypically early in an effort to reduce the stress teachers often report feeling beforehand and to focus more heavily on the writing component of the Institute. Nevertheless, standing in front of a group of peers who are described as "high caliber" is daunting. Getting through the demo is, as was mentioned earlier, a rite of passage. One of the most celebrated MWP XV demos occurred when two Fellows' afternoon demo was eclipsed by the morning demos. Not only did one of the morning presenters use the same resources for her demo, she even had the group try the same kind of writing activity that the afternoon duo had planned. And then the other morning presenter used the same anecdote about a famous author of books on writing. The final straw came when the other afternoon presenter discovered that everyone else in the group already knew all about "snapshots" and "thoughtshots," the crux of her demo. So they punted, made some quick changes in focus, and "the show went on." The cause for celebration was not that the afternoon demo was so wonderful, although it did work remarkably well under the circumstances, but because the teachers made it through an embarrassing predicament with charm and grace, although nearly everyone in the room was aware of how upset and rattled they had been only an hour before.

Learning in a learning community is inquiry-oriented; learners explore genuine questions

together (Valli, 1994; Peasley, 1992). The intention in the Summer Institute experience is for teachers to follow their questions as they peruse the book shelf and select professional materials for reading times and to take home in the evening. The framing of questions was one of the opening activities on the first day of MWP XV. In a 10-minute writing period, Fellows were asked to write down any questions raised as they read their books. The director announced, "They can be as broad as you wish. No question is too stupid. If there's someone that has all the answers, you're dismissed! Who has the most questions? Why don't you talk some at your tables to see if you have any overlap or questions that you can't pursue because you wouldn't know where to begin. Maybe you can help each other shape those questions." Fellows began to share and refocus their questions, which dealt with such issues as working with students of different ability levels, getting writers to revise beyond "surface stuff," the spelling issue, working with unmotivated/reluctant writers, and finding time to conference enough with students. In a whole group sharing session afterward, the director interrupted a spokesperson who'd noted that their group had offered suggestions but she wasn't sure that they came up with any solutions: "Why were we writing our questions down? It wasn't to get answers. So don't be disappointed. These are the questions you're going to be using as you wend your way toward the bookshelf." Later, in analyzing the types of questions, the group agreed that many of these issues are "Pre-K through death."

Another vehicle for inquiry was the demonstration. Fellows were expected to develop rationales explaining why what they are demonstrating is good practice. Those who couldn't articulate it were guided to explore professional literature and to discuss their practice with the directors who were coaching them. Demos began with the group reading silently a one-page rationale prepared by the presenters, as the focus of all presentations was to understand the theory behind teacher decisions on practice.

A continuing concern among the Fellows was helping students of all abilities succeed as writers. The following comments demonstrate one of the moments that this question was revisited so that the group could grapple with it once more: "What about the high school student who draws well but avoids writing at all costs because he is such a poor writer? I think all the high school teachers in here know what I'm talking about." The director told a story about a young man in her composition class who was like that and never turned in any written work; finally he submitted a beautiful illustration of the story on butcher paper which covered every wall of the classroom. "But what do you do? He'd never written a paper in the course; yet how could you turn down this?" Two elementary teachers spoke about the value of taping what students say and then typing it for them. Another articulated the importance of gently urging them to try to write. One middle school teacher said she had had some success in middle school with giving ECE children laptops; another described his success requiring 50-word captions with drawings.

Learner-driven: The focus on questions for inquiry is one of the strongest evidences that learning in the Institute learner-driven, a characteristic often associated with learning communities (O'Neil, 1995; Valli, 1994; Cohen, 1995). There is an emphasis on self-development and personal choice (True and Kepes, 1970). This carries over into individual choice in writing as

well; Fellows were able to start as many pieces as they wished, as long as they had one piece to share on the last day of the Institute. Only during demonstrations are writers asked to produce responses to any kind of prompt or assigned writing task. These are considered exercises and are designed to help teachers understand how to use a particular strategy in their own classrooms. Extended periods of writing are provided daily. Some chose to spend most of their time on a single piece, such as the novel for adolescents that one middle school teacher tackled. Others wrote poem after poem. "I've been working on the one children's picture book," shared one Fellow. "This class—I mean *this experience*—has given me the opportunity to think through my idea from a few years ago." Still others purposefully pushed themselves to write in genres they were uncomfortable with, following the lead of the director, who had shared her fears and failures in writing poetry. In MWP, learning is also learner-centered, adapted to the developmental needs of the participants, correlating with Valli's (1994) finding that such a focus is an important facet of learning communities. While teachers who are accepted into MWP are expected to represent the cream of the crop, this does not always happen. In an interview with the director, she explained that sometimes teachers who seem strong in the interviews are actually not; other times teachers are accepted who are not as ready for the Project experience in order to support needs of certain schools or regions. Still other times MWP takes a chance on a teacher who seems to have potential for developing through the Institute, such as one MWP XV teacher who seemed overwhelmed by many of the expectations and who continually compared her experience unfavorably with other Fellows'. The experience was a positive one for her, nonetheless, and she continues to seek the collegial support of MWP Fellows.

Learner-focused: In some aspects, such as the decisions directors make about their own presentations, MWP is less collaborative and constructivist, but always centered on the teacher. Focusing curriculum and instruction to the specific needs of the group (Ritschel, 1995) is something that MWP hopes to improve. While the basic emphasis will always be on the teaching of writing, the director would like to be able to respond more to the specific questions that arise during the course of the Institute. It is such an intense process for both participants and directors, however, that the prepared schedule often takes precedence. One exception is in the cutting of activities that seem unnecessary, based on the growing expertise of the group. In the third week of the Institute, a planned demonstration by directors of response techniques was dropped because they and the Fellows agreed that it was no longer necessary. Other director-planned activities are cut or curtailed when an issue is judged to have been addressed sufficiently in a Fellow's demo.

Directors did plan and present mini-lessons to adapt to the emerging writing needs of the group. One prepared a template for mapping one's writing processes, suggesting it would help Fellows "to see what you actually go through and where you can possibly grow. It's not until we sit down and look at our own process that we can see that." Later she had Fellows consider how such an exercise might be useful in their teaching as well, especially in conferencing with students.

Another way that directors respond to perceived needs is through the comments they make when opportunities arise and through the orchestration of the sharing time. In trying to

reinforce the notion that writer's notebooks are repositories of raw writing, directors referred to their own notebook writing as wandering, unfocused, and often "full of crap." The director often talked about her struggles in writing poetry and her lack of comfort and confidence in tackling it. She explained that Fellows needed to do the same with kinds of writing that are hard for them, and to model that for their students.

Giving participants autonomy regarding content (Cohen, 1995) occurs through the independent reading and writing time. The director believes that this freedom balances the inability to reshape the schedule of whole-group sessions in any substantial way during the course of the Institute. Instead, Fellows are encouraged to follow their specific questions to the bookshelf. An extensive library of the most current professional books on writing, as well as a collection of "old standards" is accessible at all times. At the end of the Summer Institute, Fellows are encouraged to check out books to read and use before and between the Saturday follow-up meetings during the next school year.

Relevant: In learning communities, curriculum is contextually relevant and problem based (Mallory and New, 1994). The focus on writing as a way to learn how to teach writing and the expectation that Fellows will have questions to pursue about their practice makes this true for MWP. Much of the structure of the Institute relies on modeling; the implied message is, "You learn from what you see and experience, then go and do likewise in your classroom." When directors presented, their position seemed to lend authority to their words. It was not uncommon in sharing sessions to discover that Fellows were trying the approaches or genres that were modeled. When Fellows made especially strong presentations, the director would often make a comment reinforcing the relevance of the strategy: "I hope you guys will use some of this in developing pieces from your notebooks. This is great stuff."

Assessment is authentic and meaningful in learning communities (Mallory and New, 1994). Ongoing reflection is typically a key element of self-assessment in MWP; most of these pieces are never seen by the directors, but allow Fellows to examine their writing processes, inventory what they've been writing about and make plans about the kinds of writing they'd like to do next week, and contemplate how the Institute experience will affect their classroom teaching. These prompts are designed to all the Fellows to make their own assessments, an authentic activity for any teacher.

Informal assessment of Fellows' work during the MWP XV Institute came in the form of probing questions, applause, and other natural forms of feedback. These included the required book talk, demo, log, and one piece of writing to share orally. Written products were compiled in books for the Fellows to keep; one book contained reviews on all the books that Fellows gave book talks about and the other contained one piece of personal writing by each participant. The publication was unedited because it was assumed that the response groups would help shape any problematic book reviews or personal writings. No grades were assigned to any work during the Institute. Instead, feedback was bound to its natural context: audiences applauded, colleagues discussed, and folks for whom minutes (the log) were recorded engaged in questioning,

correcting, and clarifying.

Because six hours of graduate credit are involved, there is an expectation that Fellows will turn in a major project at the end of the school year. A variety of projects have been required of MWP participants over the years, often focusing on classroom research. Fellows have conducted case studies of two different children in their classrooms, analyzing each child's writing development over a school year. Recently, and for MWP XV Fellows, the project is a portfolio of their personal and professional writing; the director feels that the most powerful effect of the Institute is in getting teachers to write. In so doing, they learn volumes about how to teach writing and how to better meet the needs of their student writers. Some of the pieces that teachers submit in their portfolios can even be used later as models for their students. The authenticity of the work rests in the fact that in the Institute, Fellows are experiencing what they must lead their students to do in their classrooms.

Fellows receive a grade for the course, however, rather than a grade for this project. Response from Fellows who read one another's portfolios at the last Saturday meeting and lengthy written response from the director serve as authentic response to authentic work. Grades are holistically determined based on overall participation in the Summer Institute and demonstration of leadership in other venues during the following school year.

Implications for Planning Other Professional Development Experiences

Can This Model Work in Other Settings? The National Writing Project has served as the model for a number of other teacher-centered communities in other disciplines, such as the California Arts Project, the California Foreign Language Project, he California History-Social Science Project, the California International Studies Project, the California Literature Project, the California Mathematics Project, and the California Science Project. There are also now summer institutes sponsored by the National Science Foundation and the National Endowment for the Humanities (Smith, 1996, 689).

Several professional development efforts have branched from the local MWP model as well. One is a Writing to Learn Institute for math, science, and social studies teachers which eventually was incorporated as part of the University's Foxfire project. Another, more of a pre-service development project, is a very successful Teacher Bridge program designed to recruit minority teachers. The MWP director helped plan both and still serves as consultant and liaison to the recruitment project. A third, called Advantage, is still directly controlled by MWP. It is an outreach effort clearly separate from the Invitational Summer Institute and described instead as a class. Advantage is designed to meet the needs of any teachers—not just exemplary ones—who simply wanted to improve their own teaching of writing, not take on leadership roles. Enrollment is first-come, first-served rather than by competitive interview, but it was designed to reflect applicable principles of the National Writing Project and to use some of the perceived strengths of the MWP experience, including treating teachers as professionals; providing an extended period of time (4.5 hours every other Saturday) for them to try the kinds of strategies which work

with writers of all ages; expectations for reading, writing, and thinking which are directly tied to the classroom; and time for professional conversations. Attention to becoming a community of writers and teachers of writing was an overarching concern. The most popular and successful aspect of the course was in the pattern which was established: reading about a strategy, seeing it demonstrated, experiencing it as a student, trying it as a teacher in one's own classroom, then returning to compare experiences and learn from the successes and difficulties of the entire group before returning to try it again in the classroom. Below is an excerpt from a recent report to the state, which provided funding, about this program:

> *Advantage* has consistently been rated 4.9+ on a 5-point scale on University course evaluations. Participants have consistently praised the class highly in narrative evaluations. Waiting lists for the course are the norm; in fact, our only real problem with this effort has been having to turn eager teachers away. Over 93% who completed *Advantage* would like to take a sequel. We are committed to continuing this outreach effort for reasons which extend beyond its popularity, however. A recent follow-up survey indicates that teachers are maintaining the changes in their teaching of writing which were initiated during the *Advantage* class. The following descriptive statistics reflect the responses on 60 out of 103 surveys mailed to teachers in November 1996:
>
> - 95% of the respondents say they are better teachers today because of their experiences in the *Advantage* class.
> - 97% have successfully implemented many of the strategies introduced in the *Advantage* class. . . .
> - 86.5% have shared what they learned in the *Advantage* class with other teachers in their schools.
> - 100% would recommend the *Advantage* class to both new and experienced teachers.
> - 80% of teachers are convinced that their students' writing is better now that they have participated in the *Advantage* class.
> - 95% indicate that they learned more in *Advantage* than in a traditional graduate course.
> - 100% of teachers state that they learned from one another during the course.

Taught by MWP Fellows, or teacher-consultants, the Advantage class replicates some of the structures of the MWP experience described in this paper.

What are the Key Structures? The structures described in this paper are ones which seemed to help build community among participants. In short, a professional learning community is not a place where teachers go to get "fixed," but rather one in which teachers contribute and learn together. Further analysis continues, but these, initially, seem key to the development of the kind of professional community which supports teachers as they inquire into their own practices

and strive to become more effective teachers:

1. A common sense of purpose

   — Supported by more experienced facilitators who see a larger picture because they have experienced the Summer Institute and now take leadership roles, promote adherence to standards, act as catalysts to link relationships and promote growth, and provide direction as appropriate
   — Authentic or relevant activities which are learner-driven and/or learner-focused
   — Self- and group reflections and assessments which inform or advance participants' teaching

2. Extended time periods for social construction of knowledge

   — Planned and unplanned opportunities for interaction between all members
   — Planned collaborations to demonstrate good practice
   — Professional conversations to explore good practice
   — Individual and group inquiry to explore good practice
   — Connections to ensure continuity of learning
   — Valuing of multiple perspectives and avoidance of programmatic or packaged responses to complex issues
   — Empowering teachers to question and even change facilitators' perspectives
   — Agenda and topics driven by the needs of the learners

3. Nurturing environment

   — Resources to support all forms of interaction, inquiry, and collaboration
   — Multiple leaders/facilitators (ideally who come from earlier cohorts) who model expectations, share power, and participate as members of the community and as co-learners
   — Rituals and norms which structure the environment and interactions
   — Valuing and sharing of teacher knowledge
   — Fostering of trusting, caring, respectful and collegial relationships
   — Promotion of learning in a non-traditional environment

4. Attention to group identity and cohesion

   — Controlled size and constancy of group membership (cohort model)
   — Development of a network composed of other cohorts
   — Attention to building of relationships through intentional pairings, informal sharing of professional questions and understandings
   — Celebrations
   — Small support groups within the whole which focus on an important aspect of

being a teacher-learner
— Activities which foster interdependence and cooperative learning

Implications for Teacher Education and Professional Development: Harmston (1987) first called for a "National Teaching Project" based on the structures of the National Writing Project, "but focused on naturalistic, language-based research methods, learning in a whole language context, and local teacher networks for professional support and self-critical inquiry" (ProQuest Dissertation Abstracts). His interest stemmed from an alternative English teacher preparation program at the University of Michigan. In this program, teachers were encouraged to learn with and for their students, to become reflective practitioners. Teachers met 10 hours per week for a semester, focusing on theory-based practice of language teaching.

The Writing Project model holds particular promise because it is such a strong example of school-university collaboration to improve teaching. The Advantage class, as was mentioned above, is an outreach effort of the MWP, an attempt by good teachers to share their best practices and developing knowledge base with other teachers. How different our schools might be if continued—and to some extent, initial—teacher education became an outreach effort of professional networks of teachers. Teachers of all levels, including the university, could work together to share and create knowledge with new cohorts of teachers, providing a support system for inquiry and a model for the kind of learning community that these teachers would be expected to create in their own classrooms.

To develop a learning community, it seems essential, then, from the finding of this study, that attention be directed to both affective and cognitive ways of knowing. Learning communities have demonstrated potential for intellectual interaction which moves teachers' thinking and potentially leads them to improve their teaching practices. The aspect of caring and all that means in regard to making teachers feel comfortable, welcome, professional, valued, and supported is something that we may rely on the work of Nel Noddings and other feminist curriculum theorists[2] to help us explore and recreate. Communities which legitimize the affective as well as the cognitive seem more closely aligned with the ideal learning community associated with the school restructuring movement (Firestone and Bader, 1991), a caring, deinstitutionalized replacement for the assembly-line model of schooling (Strategic Options Steering Committee, 1989). It requires a paradigm shift on the part of all who would support change in teaching, including both the consultant who would frame his or her work as an act of training and the teacher who would see in-service experiences as inoculations in the latest packaged innovation. To learn in community is to defy isolation and the protection it provides for our vulnerability and uncertainty. Professional growth is a lived experience, requiring that we draw on all aspects of our humanity.

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[2]Women's Studies as an academic discipline demonstrates the correlation of cognitive and affective knowing. The feminist model encourages cooperation among members of a learning community, values clarification, an interdependent and collective learning experience, and integration of experiential learning with theoretical learning (Wetzel, 1978).

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